

Chapter 3

The First On the Scene

Notes

Objectives

After completing this section, participants will be able to:

- ▶ Discuss different situations involving hazardous materials.
- ▶ Better recognize a hazardous situation.
- ▶ Understand the need for gathering information before actions are taken.
- ▶ Better understand the role of the first responder.

Introduction

In every emergency situation, someone discovers the situation. It is important that this first person assess what has happened, secure the area to keep others away, and call for help. This is the role of the first responder at the awareness level. The person who is the first on the scene performs a critical role in getting the response sequence started.

First on the scene responders must be trained how to safely, quickly, and accurately report information. If incorrect information is given, others will be put in danger. If you are the first on the scene of a hazardous material emergency your actions could save lives and the environment.

Introduction

The following activity will give you an opportunity to discuss different situations involving hazardous materials. The case studies are grouped by types of jobs. During this activity, think about :

- How can we determine if the materials in the case studies are hazardous materials?
- What kind of information might be needed by emergency responders to deal with the situations?
- What is your role as the person first on the scene?

Exercise Directions

- 1) Your facilitator will break up the class into small groups of 3 to 6 participants.
- 2) The facilitator will tell your group which mystery you will work on. In each group, ask for a volunteer to be the reader for the group.
- 3) In each group, ask for a different volunteer to be the note-taker and to report back for the group.
- 4) Take about five to ten minutes to work on the mysteries. Try to stay within the facts given in each case study.
- 5) After all the groups have completed their mysteries, the facilitator will ask for each group's report back.

DOT/DPW

Mystery A

It's a hot July Friday afternoon. Your supervisor has told you to go up to the salt and sand shed and pick up two sand spreaders for re-painting and general maintenance. When you arrive at the shed you notice someone has dumped several old transformers right next to the shed. Two of the transformers are tipped over, and there is a puddle underneath the them.

In your small group, answer the following questions:

- 1) What clues do you have that something serious may be occurring? (Hint: what hazardous material was often used in old transformers?)

- 2) Who will you call for assistance?

- 3) What next steps should you take? List all you can think of.

DOT/DPW

Mystery B

It's 9:00 am on a Monday and you are mowing shoulders along an interstate highway. You are working alone And your tractor mower is not equipped with a radio. As you approach a small stream which flows through a tube culvert under a highway, you notice several 55 gallon metal drums lying in the stream. The water is covered with a yellow foam and you can see a dark brown, almost black, oily liquid in the water around the drum. The lids have come off some of the drums and you can see a red diamond shaped label on a couple of them.

In your small group, answer the following questions:

- 1) What information should you gather?

- 2) Who would you call for help?

- 3) What next steps should you take? List all you can think of.

DOT/DPW

Mystery C

It's 2:30 am and you are working snow removal during near blizzard conditions. You come across a tractor-trailer that has jackknifed and overturned, spilling a thick amber liquid all over the road and shoulder. The truck driver appears injured, but you can't tell how badly. Suddenly, a four-wheel drive pickup with a red light on top pulls up. A man jumps out of the four-by-four and says he's a volunteer firefighter. The volunteer walks through the spill to check on the truck driver, and then yells at you to start shoveling sand to stop the spilled material from flowing into a nearby stream.

In your small group, answer the following questions:

- 1) First, what SHOULDN'T you do?

- 2) What next steps should you take? List all that you can think of.

- 3) Should the volunteer have done anything differently?

Custodial/Maintenance

Mystery A

You are the night custodian for a large school district. You often work by yourself and your supervisor may be on another floor or in a completely different building. For the most part, things are pretty quiet, although last week you did catch one of the kids trying to break into the building. Your regular nightly rounds take you by the Science Lab on the second floor of the High School. Tonight, as soon as you enter the lab, you notice a putrid odor and your eyes begin to burn. As you turn to hurry out of the room, you almost knock over some glass jugs that appear to be empty.

In your groups, consider the following questions:

- 1) What information can you gather?

- 2) What next steps should you take? List all that you can think of.

- 3) Who would you call for help?

Water/Wastewater

Mystery A

You work in a water treatment plant. You have entered the warehouse, which is next to the loading dock. The dock workers are in the process of receiving a shipment of chemicals. As you approach the area, you notice a pallet of blue drums with a puddle underneath it. As you get closer, you can see that there is a dent in one, and a crease that is visibly leaking on another drum. You can see red diamond shaped labels on the drums. You now smell a bad odor that reminds you of glue.

In your groups, consider the following questions:

- 1) What clues do you have that something serious may be happening?

- 2) What next steps will you take? List all that you can think of.

Water/Wastewater

Mystery B

You work at a large advanced waste-water treatment plant. You arrive for work early one morning and park next to the railroad siding. The air is perfectly still. As you get out of your truck, you notice a large yellowish-green cloud forming at ground level and that the cloud seems to be coming from the top of one of the railroad tank cars on the siding.

In your groups, consider the following questions:

- 1) What clues are given that something serious is happening?

- 2) Who can you call for help?

- 3) What next steps will you take? List all that you can think of.

Water/Wastewater

Mystery C

You are a plant operator in a water treatment plant. The chlorine alarm has just gone off and your supervisor tells you that a co-worker had been trying to stop a small leak at the valve on cylinder using a "B" Kit. He tells you that the co-worker may still be trapped inside the chlorine room. He orders you to put on an air pack and get in there to get your co-worker out.

In your groups, consider the following questions:

- 1) Should you try and rescue your co-worker? If the answer is "yes" what training / qualifications are necessary?

- 2) If you don't attempt a rescue what steps will you and/or your supervisor take? List all that you can think of.

- 3) What information should you and/or your supervisor gather?

Campus Police /Security

Mystery A

Officer Smith is conducting his regular rounds on the evening shift. When he approaches the back of the Student Center, he notices several old looking barrels have been placed by the dumpster. Some are lying on their side, and there is a pool of liquid under one. He can see a black and white label on one of the barrels. Students are playing Frisbee football in the next lot.

In your groups, consider the following questions:

- 1) What “clues” do you have that something serious may be happening?

- 2) What steps should Officer Smith take? List all you can think of.

Campus Police/Security

Mystery B

You are a security guard at a large university. You are making your rounds at the physical plant. As you enter the building, you can hear a loud hissing sound from the next room.

In your groups consider the following questions:

- 1) Could this be a hazardous materials emergency?

- 2) What information should you gather?

- 3) What next steps should you take?

What Does an Awareness Level Responder Do?

Notes

Here are some examples of what your job as an Awareness Level responder might include:

- *Witness or discover* a spill or leak on the road or in your facility.
- *Move to a safe distance* from the incident as you *alert others* in the immediate area know that there is an emergency and they should move away. This means no more than yelling or signaling to others nearby.
- *Size up the scene.* Try to collect clues from a safe distance to help identify the chemical. This will help responders to assess the risk and make decisions about how to handle the emergency.
- *Notify* -- Radio, or call in -- the designated authorities to get the emergency response started as quickly as possible. . The Emergency Response Plan should also specify the person or office you are supposed to notify, and how to contact that person.
- *Secure the scene* which means helping to keep people from the hazardous area or "hot zone." This could include helping to divert traffic from the emergency scene. You would do this at the instruction of the incident commander.
- *Turn off or remove ignition sources* if the materials can catch on fire or explode. Ignition sources could include running engines, lights, lighters, flares, pilot lights, and many other items.

- *Continue to observe* the emergency until the other responders arrive. Identify yourself to them. Pass along information about what you have seen, heard, and done.
- *Record* what you did and saw. If someone is hurt or dies in the incident or there is serious damage to the environment or property, you may be asked to testify. Your notes may be very helpful. Write down the following:
 - date, location, and time
 - description of emergency -- sequence of events, and what you did
 - what you saw – any markings, placards, or other clues you observed
 - names, affiliations of people involved (victims, witnesses, other responders)

Your duties should be clearly stated in your employers Emergency Response Plan.

You cannot be asked to do anything more unless you have further training and the proper equipment to keep yourself safe.

Notes

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What if You Feel Ill During or After the Emergency?

- If you have any symptoms or health problems during or after an emergency, your employer must make sure that you see a doctor. You should:
- Get information about the chemicals involved in the emergency (if you can).
- Inform your employer.
- See a doctor, preferably one with training in occupational medicine.
- Notify the agency that was in charge of responding to the emergency. Or ask your employer to notify this agency.
- Keep a diary of symptoms you feel and when you feel them.

The First On the Scene

Key Points 3

- 1) Incidents involving unknown or hazardous materials can happen anywhere, and each incident is different.
- 2) All unknown materials are to be considered hazardous until proven otherwise.
- 3) As first responder, you are the most important person in the entire response process!
- 4) First responders are responsible for:
 - Gathering information, or clues, from a safe distance;
 - Accurately reporting that information to authorities or the person designated in your Emergency Response Plan and;
 - Alerting people nearby and keeping others out, if possible to do so safely.
- 5) **Never** put yourself in danger to gather information.
- 6) Only assist injured workers if it is safe to do so, and you have been trained in medical assistance.